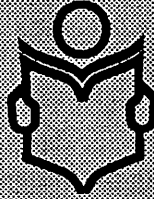


Adult Literacy Contact Centre NEWSLETTER



February 1992

Volume 5, Number 2

A project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C.

TV Literacy Documentary: *Ellen's Story*

A television documentary about a Victoria, B.C. woman's lifelong struggle with low literacy skills - and her eventual triumph - will air on national television this spring.

The film, called *Ellen's Story*, by Robert Duncan Productions Inc. of Vancouver, will be broadcast by the CanWest/Global network. In B.C. the film will be seen in the UTV broadcast area of Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. Plans are still pending for the film to be aired in other areas of B.C.

The film was produced with the participation of Telefilm Canada, in association with UTV, and with the participation of the National Literacy Secretariat, Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada; ABC Canada; and the National Film Board of Canada. It was written, produced and directed by Robert Duncan and researched and co-produced by Sharon Ann McGowan.

The film is a documentary about the life of 50-year-old, British-born, Ellen Szita, who dropped out of school at age 14 (with approximately a Grade 5 reading level ability) before emigrating to Canada at age 18. The film traces Szita's childhood and adolescence in England and her struggles, as a single mother with four children,

attempting to support herself in Victoria with few employment skills. Szita, who has a learning disability, eventually sought help through the Victoria READ Society and Camosun College adult learning classes, and graduated from Grade 12.

Duncan is a Scots-born filmmaker whose 18-year career includes the Oscar-nominated feature documentary, *Volcano: An Enquiry into the Life and Death of Malcolm Lowry* (1977), and *Family: A Loving Look at CBC Radio* (1991). He met Szita through his association with the Peter Gzowski Invitational Golf Tournament (a literacy fund-raising event) two years ago in Victoria.

McGowan has worked in film and television since 1975 producing programs on social, educational and environmental issues. She is a past president of Vancouver Women in Film and Video and is on the board of the B.C. Motion Picture Association.

Ellen's Story is expected to air in B.C. in late March. More details on the production will be available the first week of March in the *Adult Literacy Contact Centre Newsletter*, Volume 5, No. 3. □

New Personnel in Federal Government Literacy

The Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, Pacific and Yukon Region, has a new Regional Director in Vancouver responsible for literacy. Orest Kruhlak became Regional Director of the Department effective January 6, 1992.

Literacy, which was formerly the responsibility of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, is now one of five program areas under the new Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada. The others are Multiculturalism, Citizenship Registration and Promotion, Human Rights, and Voluntary Action.

Wendy Carter, Regional Director, B.C. and Yukon Region, Department of the Secretary of State, will maintain responsibility for programs relating to Official Languages, Translation, Disabled Persons Participation, Women, Native Citizens, Youth, State Protocol, Canada Day and Education Support.

Kruhlak was formerly Executive Director of the Laurier Institute, a non-profit

research and educational foundation based in Vancouver and supported by the B.C. corporate community. The Institute has a mandate "to study the issues arising out of Canada's cultural diversity." He also taught Political Science at the University of British Columbia for three years prior to joining the Institute, and was a Regional Director with the Secretary of State Department in Vancouver from 1981 to 1986. Prior to that, he was the Director General, Multicultural Programs, in Ottawa.

Kruhlak says he has had an interest in literacy issues "since 1985, when the government of Canada first began considering a national literacy program."

"One of the major thrusts at the regional level will be expanding our literacy effort," he says. "Unless we get ahead of the problem it will only become more acute with the amount of technological change taking place."

Orest Kruhlak
Regional Director
Pacific and Yukon Region
Department of Multiculturalism and
Citizenship Canada
12th Floor
800 Burrard Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2N5
Phone: 666-0176 (switchboard)

As of January 20, 1992, B.C. literacy cost-shared projects have a new contact at the National Literacy Secretariat

(NLS), Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada. Yvette Souque, Senior Coordination Officer, has taken over responsibility for the B.C. files. She replaces Sue Smee, who has assumed interim responsibility for Program Delivery, including federal/provincial/territorial relations.

Souque, a social worker with a background in immigrant services in Alberta, has been with the NLS since June 1991. In the fall she assumed responsibility for the Business and Labour program. This program has sponsored such B.C. projects as the Business Council of British Columbia Workplace Literacy Project and the 1991 research for the Council of Forest Industries of B.C./ IWA Canada, *A Preliminary Study of Job-related Communication Skills in British Columbia Sawmills*. Souque will maintain her responsibility for the Business and Labour program along with her new role in directing federal/provincial cost-shared literacy projects in B.C.

Yvette Souque
Senior Coordination Officer
National Literacy Secretariat
Department of Multiculturalism and
Citizenship Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0M5
Phone: (819) 953-5286
Fax: (819) 953-8076 ☐

Media Workshops Update

The series of media workshops designed to teach basic public relations skills to local literacy groups, as part of the B.C. Literacy Public Awareness Campaign - Phase 2, continues this month on Vancouver Island and the B.C. Interior.

Two workshops have taken place so far this month (in Campbell River on February 6, and in Victoria on February 7) and two more are scheduled:

Williams Lake - February 28

Contact: Debbie DeMare
Phone: 392-6202

Kelowna - February 29

Contact: Maxine Veach
Phone: 762-2163

The workshops (called "How to Increase Awareness About Literacy Issues in Your Community") will cover such topics as: how to set priorities and choose key messages; practical ideas and suggestions for creating new opportunities; and how to get your message to the public through the media.

The workshops are conducted by Nancy Spooner, Director of Public Relations for McKim Advertising (Vancouver), the agency on contract for conducting the campaign. The campaign is also responsible for the 30-second radio and

television public service announcements currently underway throughout B.C. The public service announcements (citing the Adult Literacy Contact Centre toll-free telephone number) have been aired on over 90 B.C. radio stations and on BCTV during January and February, 1992.

The Campaign is the second phase of a B.C. cost-shared project between the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat, Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada. (College partner, Vancouver Community College.)

For further information on the public awareness campaign, contact any member of the advisory committee:

Chair: Betty Nobel
Vancouver Community College
(King Edward Campus)
Phone: 871-7008

Member: Linda Hackett
Adult Literacy Contact Centre
(Vancouver)
Phone: 684-0624
Toll-free: 1-800-663-1293

Member: Linda Mitchell
Literacy B.C. (Vancouver)
Phone: 687-5077



The State of Learning in Canada

The federal government has published two discussion papers intended to raise questions about Canada's learning system.

Learning Well...Living Well and a companion discussion paper, *Prosperity Through Competitiveness*, are part of the government's "Prosperity Initiative," which was announced in the Speech from the Throne, May 13, 1991. (See *ALCC Newsletter*, May 1991, Volume 4, No. 5, page 3.)

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Adult Literacy Contact Centre Newsletter

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Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1L8
1-800-663-1293 Toll-free in B.C.
684-0624 Lower Mainland
684-8520 Facsimile

The Adult Literacy Contact Centre is a project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology; and the National Literacy Secretariat.

The Centre welcomes receiving your literacy news by phone, fax or mail. We reserve the right to edit written submissions for the newsletter.

The newsletter is published monthly and mailed during the first week of every month. It is available free of charge to any individual or agency upon request.



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Both papers are from the Ministry of Employment and Immigration and the Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology Canada.

The papers' primary aim is "...to initiate a consensus-building discussion to arrive at common targets and priorities for learning in Canada." The paper cites a changing economy, demographic shifts, new occupational skill requirements and accelerated technological change as sources of "the learning challenge" facing Canadians.

The paper notes that:

"With each generation, Canada is becoming a more literate and better educated society:

- ❖ In 1951, less than half of Canadian adults had a grade nine education. In 1986, four of five adults had at least a grade nine education and almost half (45 per cent) the adult population were secondary school graduates....

However, many are still left out:

- ❖ Three out of 10 students (100,000 a year) still drop out before finishing high school, creating a growing group that is often functionally illiterate, largely untrainable and increasingly unemployable.

- ❖ Four of ten adults (38 per cent) have some difficulty with everyday reading and math demands."

The goal of the prosperity initiative is to "stimulate a national discussion on the factors that determine [Canada's] future prosperity" through a series of national consultations, and "develop consensus on a national action plan for the balance of the 1990's." Consultations will be lead by a Steering Group which will produce a plan of action for governments, business, labour, the academic and scientific communities, and individuals.

Both papers are available free of charge from:

Prosperity Secretariat
Correspondence Unit
8th Floor West
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0H5
Phone: 1-800-465-2220 ☐

Plain Language and the Law

The documents produced by B.C.'s lawyers are difficult to read and hard to understand for a majority of B.C. residents, a recent survey commissioned by B.C.'s Plain Language Institute has found.

The Plain Language Institute (PLI) is an incorporated not-for-profit society, established in 1990 and funded by the B.C. Ministry of the Attorney General and the Law Foundation of B.C., to promote

the use of plain language in law, government and business. The survey was conducted for the PLI from September 28 - October 23, 1991 by the Angus Reid Group, a national public opinion and market research firm.

A cross-section of 600 B.C. residents, excluding people with legal training or who work in the legal field, was asked to comment about legal documents produced by lawyers, business and government and on how comprehensible they found selected professionals — lawyers, doctors, landlords, police, insurance agents, teachers, dentists, bank officers, mechanics and politicians.

The results indicate that most people in the province (57%), regardless of age, sex, original language or [geographic] region, rate legal documents generally as poorly written and hard to understand. Documents written by lawyers are considered most important compared to those which come from government or business sources. But the lawyers' written work is the hardest to understand." In contrast, ".... a majority of B.C. residents considered magazines, novels, encyclopedias, dictionaries, tabloid and broadsheet newspapers and non-fiction literature to be well-written and easy to read."

PLI Executive Director Phil Knight says the results of the

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Words From Around the World

A book of writings by learners from around the world compiled during International Literacy Year (1990) by the International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL) is now available through a distributor in Canada.

Words Are What I've Got is a 142-page volume of stories and drawings by learners from 50 countries, which "documents the words of newly literate men and women from all over the world." The book "portrays the feelings, hopes and dreams of men and women who have been denied the opportunity of receiving a formal education." Most of the writings are reproduced in their original language and format, and each section contains a profile of the writer's country of origin.

Nations represented in the book include Africa (14 countries), Asia (India, Japan, Korea, Thailand), the Caribbean, Britain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway,

Latin America, the South Pacific, the U.S.A. and Canada. There are five Canadian entries.

The book was launched at a ceremony at the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) in Toronto on November 1, 1991. The ITFL, a coalition of 35 non-governmental organizations, was initiated by the ICAE in 1987 "to ensure that International Literacy Year would be a year for action with long term results."

Words Are What I've Got is available by cheque or money order from the ICAE for \$22.95 (includes postage and handling). Contact:

International Council for Adult Education
720 Bathurst Street
Suite 500
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2R4
Phone: (416) 588-1211
Fax: (416) 588-5725



Education Bursary for Battered Women

A recently-formed support society for the victims of wife assault has started a campaign to raise funds for an educational bursary.

The mandate of the Sanctuary Foundation (incorporated April 1991) is "to provide opportunities for women who want to upgrade their education and job skills." The bursary

fund is intended to assist women - whose goal is academic upgrading - with tuition, textbooks, food, shelter and daycare. The education fund is one of three targets for the foundation's fundraising campaign, along with daycare and subsidized housing.

The foundation intends to establish what it calls a "second stage" housing complex in the Burnaby area where women and children from abusive relationships can stay for up to one year. "The first criterion for selection will be an

intention to return to school," says Robyn Bradford, the foundation's Executive Director. She says the foundation "will provide information, encouragement and support for women to attend courses at any level, including literacy and adult basic education, at institutions such as Douglas College and Vancouver Community College."

The foundation's first fundraising event is a benefit concert and art show with Vancouver performer Amanda

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Hughes, Sunday, February 9, at Vancouver's Hyatt Regency Hotel ballroom at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$12.00 and available from Ticketmaster outlets.

For information on the fundraising event or on the foundation, contact:

Robyn Bradford
Executive Director
Sanctuary Foundation
536 Louis Riel House
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C.
V5A 1S6
Phone: 299-0276 ☐

Aboriginal Literacy Training Event

Registration is open until April 16 for western Canada's first aboriginal literacy training event to be held May 19-23, 1992 at Okanagan College in Kelowna.

The event, which will offer a range of courses in both aboriginal literacy and English language literacy practices, is one of the 1991/1992 cost-shared projects between the National Literacy Secretariat and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. (College partner, Okanagan College; community partner, Yukon Literacy Council.)

The event will bring together educators working in native

literacy from B.C., Yukon, and Alberta.

Featured presenters confirmed to date include Priscilla George, Native Literacy Program Coordinator, Ontario Ministry of Education; Pat Rigg, author and literacy consultant, Tucson, Arizona; Carmen Rodriguez, independent literacy consultant (Simon Fraser University); and Martha Austin-Garrison, Navajo Community College, Shiprock, New Mexico.

Confirmed courses to date include:

- ❖ community-based literacy programs
- ❖ effective literacy practices with native adults
- ❖ northern workplace literacy
- ❖ developing and publishing student materials
- ❖ numeracy at the fundamental level
- ❖ integrating life skills into literacy programs
- ❖ aboriginal language literacy
- ❖ urban native literacy

The registration fee for the event is \$175.00.

For further information, contact:

Aboriginal Literacy Training Event
Native Adult Education Resource Centre
Box 610
Salmon Arm, B.C.
V1E 4N7
Phone: (toll-free) 1-800-665-9972
☐

Travelling Team Reports From the Field

A team of literacy and adult basic education practitioners who visited a total of 39 literacy programs in B.C. last year to study program delivery have issued a report on their project.

The report on Program Visitation and Observation, *The Team Members' Journal*, was a 1990/1991 cost-shared project between the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat. The report is the result of two trips undertaken by project participants in September and November, 1991.

Leslie Tenta, Project Coordinator, says in her preamble to the report, in explanation of the project: "Practitioners in the field of adult literacy education have long recognized the need to pursue opportunities to meet and share with other practitioners....Unfortunately the reality of work in adult developmental education means that the instructors are frequently isolated in small centres, struggling to keep up with the daily work load....As a result, literacy practitioners may become locked into one methodology with limited knowledge of the diversities that exist in the adult education

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field. Lack of familiarity may cause doubt about the validity of other methods and programs."

The participants' reports include:

- ❖ Self-paced Computer Learning vs. Group Learning
- ❖ The Learner is the Key
- ❖ Trends in Mathematics Assessment in ABE
- ❖ Welcoming Learners
- ❖ Thoughts About Assessing Programs
- ❖ Celebrate Our Differences

Copies of the report were distributed in the last week of January to the programs that participated in the project and to the literacy field. Copies are also available free of charge through the Adult Literacy Contact Centre. □

Houston Conference Update

Representatives from business, labour and education will be featured speakers at B.C.'s first northern conference on literacy March 26 - 28 in Houston, B.C.

The conference, called "The Next Step: Building Community Partnerships for Literacy," is designed to develop a strategic plan for a northern B.C. literacy network

and address issues related to literacy and employment. The event, the result of more than a year of planning, is a 1991/1992 cost-shared project between the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat.

Featured speakers are:

Bert Hawyrsh, Vice-President Occupational Safety and Health, B.C. Council of Forest Industries;
Geoff Weller, President of the University of Northern British Columbia;
John Edward Sorrell, Vancouver writer and teacher;
and a representative (still to be named) from Canada Post.

The six working sessions cover a range of topics:

- ❖ Communities Working Together
- ❖ Supporting Volunteer Tutors
- ❖ Literacy on the Job
- ❖ Building Strong Literacy Boards
- ❖ Community Literacy Leaders: A Native Initiative
- ❖ Overcoming Literacy Barriers

Participation subsidies will be available for remote areas of northern B.C.

For more information, contact:

Bonny Hawley
Conference Coordinator
Phone: 845-3277 (Houston)
Fax: 845-3521 (Houston)

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Feminist Literacy Workers

March 1, 1992 is the deadline for applications to attend the first Feminist Literacy Workers Network conference May 15-17, 1992 at the University of British Columbia.

The conference, funded by a grant from the Department of the Secretary of State, is organized by national and B.C. planning committees of the Network. A founding meeting of the Network will take place at the conference.

Nora Randall, conference organizer, says the event is for: "feminists who work in the literacy field and want an opportunity to talk to others in a similar position." She says the conference will include "three women from each province and territory, as well as national and B.C. organizers and women at large. Fifteen per cent of the spaces will be reserved for First Nations women and women of colour, and special consideration will be given to women with disabilities."

For more information, contact:

Nora D. Randall
Conference Organizer
Feminist Literacy Workers Network
4785 Gladstone Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V5N 5A4
Phone: 435-5772
Fax: 874-7956

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Message from the Contact Centre

1992/1993 Cost-Shared Project Applications Update

Since the article, "1992/1993 Cost-Shared Applications," in the January 1992 *Adult Literacy Contact Centre Newsletter*, the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) and the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) have clarified two points:

Definition of Literacy

The definition of literacy used for the purpose of adjudicating proposals will be the one used by Statistics Canada in its 1989 survey of adult literacy in Canada: "the information processing skills necessary to use the printed material commonly encountered at work, at home, and in the community."

Timeline

February 15, 1992: the Partnership Agreement must be negotiated and agreed to by all parties

March 2, 1992: the application must be received by both the NLS and the MAETT

March 31, 1992: the B.C. external review process will be completed

The MAETT and the NLS report that they "will complete their negotiations and review process as soon as possible after the external review is completed. Every effort will be made to ensure that project funding will be announced in time for a September start date."

For further information on applying for 1992/1993 literacy cost-shared funds, contact:

Patty Bossort
Literacy Cost-Shared Projects
Liaison
c/o Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development
5th Floor, 1483 Douglas Street
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 3K4
Phone: 387-6119
Fax: 387-9142

or:

Pat Hodgson
Provincial Literacy Coordinator
Ministry of Advanced Education
Training and Technology
Second Floor
838 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4
Phone: 387-6174
Fax: 356-8851

or:

Yvette Souque
Senior Coordination Officer
National Literacy Secretariat
Department of Multiculturalism
and Citizenship Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0M5
Phone: (819) 953-5286
Fax: (819) 953-8076

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survey will be used in the Institute's promotional and educational activities.

Additional research will be coordinated over this year to determine what makes legal materials hard to understand and what writers should be doing to communicate more effectively.

For more information, contact:

Phil Knight
Executive Director
The Plain Language Institute
1500 - 555 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 4N6
Phone: 687-8895
Fax: 687-0018 ☐

OUR OTHER SERVICES

As well as producing this newsletter, the Adult Literacy Contact Centre has services for all B.C.:

we give information and encouragement by phone to adults who want to know about adult basic education opportunities in their own community;

we provide literacy information to the non-profit and community-based sector, business, labour, the media, all levels of government and the public at large; and

we refer volunteer tutors to adult literacy programs.

Phone free from anywhere in B.C.

1-800-663-1293